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AUTHOR Lund, Nick L.
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ABSTRACT

In 1988, the Arizona Board of Regents, Legislature, and the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges approved an innovative partnership between Northern Arizona University (NAU) and Arizona Western College (AWC) in Yuma. The AWC/NAU partnership was designed to expand higher education opportunities in southwest Arizona. This document describes aspects of the partnership that contribute to its success, including: (1) cooperation in the development of campus services; (2) layering of campus services; (3) curricular articulation; (4) organizational reporting and management; (5) professional development; (6) operational agreements; (7) the Yuma K-20 consortium; and (8) fostering economic development. Under this partnership, AWC offers freshman and sophomore courses leading to associate's degrees, and NAU in Yuma offers junior and senior courses leading to baccalaureate degrees, as well as graduate programs at the master's and doctoral levels. Instruction is offered using both traditional and distance learning modes. NAU and AWC share the same campus, which is a factor different from most other educational partnerships of this type. A new academic building and computer lab co-operated by NAU and AWC are the most recent examples of shared space facilitated by the partnership. In the 10 years that the partnership has been running, NAU/AWC has graduated over 1500 students in Yuma with NAU bachelor's or graduate degrees. (AS)

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An Innovative University/Community College Partnership

Nick L. Lund, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Northern Arizona University in Yuma
P O Box 6236
Yuma AZ 85366-6236

520-317-6402
Nick.Lund@NAU.EDU

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BACKGROUND

In 1988, as one approach to projections of significant student enrollment growth, to provide greater accessibility to higher education in previously underserved regions of the State, and to effectively use limited educational resources, the Arizona Board of Regents, Legislature, and the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges approved an innovative partnership between Northern Arizona University (NAU) and Arizona Western College (AWC) in Yuma. This partnership was designed to expand higher education opportunities in southwest Arizona, a region of the State served until that time through the associate's degree level. Under this partnership AWC offers freshman and sophomore courses leading to associate's degrees, and NAU in Yuma offers junior and senior courses leading to baccalaureate degrees. NAU in Yuma also provides graduate programs at the masters and doctorate levels. In an innovative approach, AWC and NAU in Yuma share a complete campus and provide an integrated approach to delivery of higher education.

Arizona Western College is a community college with a main campus in Yuma, that serves Yuma and La Paz counties. AWC was founded in 1963, has a current student enrollment of over 7,000 per semester, and offers over 40 associate degree programs. Northern Arizona University began in Flagstaff in 1899 as a normal school, changed to a teachers college in 1925, and officially became NAU in 1973. Today, NAU enrolls almost 20,000 students, with more than 15,000 in Flagstaff and the remainder at statewide program sites such as Yuma. NAU offers approximately 90 bachelors, 40 masters, and 8 doctoral degree programs. NAU and AWC are accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

The AWC/NAU partnership enables each institution to fulfill its unique mission and to work together to effectively use resources in offering expanded higher education opportunities. Preservation of institutional mission has been noted as an essential criterion of other university/community college partnerships reviewed around the United States. The NAU mission statement includes statewide delivery of higher education, with NAU in Yuma as one component of that mission. Through NAU in Yuma 24 baccalaureate, 7 masters, and 1 doctoral degree program options are currently offered. Students work with approximately 20 NAU faculty and 15 staff members, who are full-time and reside in Yuma, to ensure a "seamless" transition from community college to university programs.

INSTRUCTIONAL MODES

Instruction is offered in traditional and distance learning modes. NAU is a leading university nationally in use of interactive instructional television (IITV) and other distance learning capabilities. Approximately 20% of the NAU in Yuma courses per semester utilize IITV and are broadcast into or from Yuma to other statewide sites. NAU and AWC electronically link their interactive television systems so that courses can reach the service areas of each institution.

SHARING PHYSICAL SPACE

One unique aspect of the NAU/AWC educational partnership that contributes to its success is that AWC and NAU in Yuma share the same campus. Integrated sharing of physical space is one factor different from most other educational partnerships of this type in the United States. All aspects of the campus, including all educational and support facilities and services, are available to AWC and NAU students, faculty and staff. A partnership arrangement such as this requires significant, close working relationships between faculty, administrations, staff members, and students. While a key factor is open, close working relationships of the people involved, physical co-location is one component of the NAU/AWC partnership that facilitates personal working relationships. Co-location provides an opportunity and basis for close communication at every organizational level, which is necessary for effective educational flow of curricula, faculty interactions, student recruitment, retention and transfer and numerous other areas of organizational interface. Sharing of physical space can be a significant factor in that success because that sharing is not only a more cost effective approach, it also provides a foundation for close, daily working relationships. A major example of shared space is a new academic building that was opened in January, 1997. Because both institutions' continued growth in student enrollment, available classroom, office space, and support facilities became significantly limited. NAU and AWC proposed a new building to support the developing campus, which was approved by the Arizona Legislature, Board of Regents, and Governor's Office. The building was designed for the next five years of total campus growth. NAU and AWC faculty and staff are integrated in this, and other, campus buildings, and AWC and NAU in Yuma students have full use each campus building. For example, because the former open access computer laboratory was inadequate to serve the increased number of students, a new lab was included in the building. The new lab tripled the number of computer stations and has two attached computer classrooms, all of which is operated by NAU and AWC staff and jointly funded by both institutions.

LAYERING OF CAMPUS SERVICES

Another factor in the success of the NAU/AWC partnership is cooperation in development of campus services. From the perspective that one institution provides freshman and sophomore levels and the other builds on those levels in providing junior, senior and graduate levels, it becomes apparent that both institutions need to work cooperatively on many aspects of campus services, including, but not limited to the Library, student advisement, learning assistance centers, financial aid, and computer facilities. In the developing NAU/AWC partnership, NAU provides staff, student assistants, electronic services, and acquisitions to support and develop the campus Library. NAU also supports other campus operations, such as computer systems development and operations, in a similar manner. A cadre of full-time NAU student services personnel provide recruitment, academic advising, financial aid and other student services. NAU and AWC Student Services share the same building and work together effectively. Continuing efforts are in process to increase working integration in order to make services and curricular articulation as "seamless" as possible for students.

CURRICULAR ARTICULATION

Curricular articulation issues each school to invite faculty from the partner institution to serve on institution-level curriculum committees. Early involvement in curriculum decisions and discussions is a key component of an educational partnership. NAU and AWC are currently working to facilitate department-level curricular discussions and planning. NAU and AWC are leaders on statewide articulation task forces.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTING AND MANAGEMENT

From an organizational perspective, management reporting lines involving multiple reporting relationships and a "matrix-type" organizational structure that crosses institutional boundaries become necessary because of the need to fulfill the overlapping and different missions of each institution. Institutional administrations work closely together and communicate effectively in management, planning and implementation of all campus aspects. In this context, individuals must transcend traditional institutional boundaries and approach issues from broader perspectives. In addition, when new faculty and staff are recruited, emphasis is placed on individual responsibilities in effective partnership relations and facilitating those relations. Currently, both institutions are represented on most search committees to facilitate a partnership approach. Another aspect of the NAU/AWC partnership that deserves comment is the close communication and coordination that occurs for effective operations and continuing developmental efforts. Close liaison is maintained at every level of both organizations. Not only do the AWC president, the NAU president, and the NAU in Yuma executive director communicate regularly and effectively, respective individuals at each level of both organizations work closely with

counterparts early in planning stages when decisions are being formulated. Virtually every decision that is made, in some way, affects each organization. Although close communication depends heavily on the commitment of people at all levels in both organizations, the flow of communication is also facilitated through design of effective organizational environments and daily working interfaces.

The Yuma campus library is one good example of the multidimensional coordination and matrix organization that must take place in an educational partnership of this type. Organizationally, the NAU in Yuma head librarian reports to the NAU in Yuma executive director; however, it is essential that she work intricately with the AWC library staff and the NAU in Flagstaff library staff to define and effectively implement a coordinated acquisitions plan. Thus, her office is in the AWC/NAU in Yuma Library, and she maintains close coordination and working relations with the AWC Library staff and with the NAU in Flagstaff Library staff to develop and implement a coordinated acquisitions plan that serves the mission of both institutions. Many resources of the NAU in Flagstaff Library are available to Yuma through various electronic means and through a well-developed interlibrary loan system that includes rapid document delivery technology. NAU contributes significantly to acquisitions and electronic delivery components of the Yuma campus Library.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Another aspect of the integrated campus approach is professional development. AWC's Center for Teaching Effectiveness and NAU's Office of Instructional Development collaborate in providing professional development workshops, forums, and colloquia. AWC and NAU in Yuma faculty work together in designing programs to facilitate professional development opportunities.

OPERATIONAL AGREEMENTS

A key component of the AWC/NAU partnership is an attempt to formulate operational agreements as simply as possible. For example, NAU and AWC faculty and staff are co-located in the new academic building, and NAU and AWC students have classes in the building, which is the operational responsibility of NAU. NAU does not charge AWC for use of the new building, and AWC does not charge NAU for use of any other campus building, all of which are the operational responsibility of AWC. NAU and AWC have co-located student services personnel, librarians, computer personnel, and interactive television personnel in order to provide coordinated, more efficient services. Thus, one goal of the partnership is to operate as true partners in as simple and straightforward a manner as feasible.

YUMA K-20 CONSORTIUM

Based on the success of the AWC/NAU partnership, a broader consortium was formed that includes AWC, NAU-Yuma, Yuma Elementary School District #1, and the Yuma Union High School District. This Consortium has been very successful in pooling resources to save money for the taxpayers of southwest Arizona and to enable accomplishments beyond those of any single member of the Consortium. For example, a Transportation Center, with YUHS as the fiscal agent, transports students over 16,000 miles daily with resources primarily from YUHS and YED#1. AWC and NAU-Yuma use the transportation center on a charge-back basis. This approach has resulted in considerable annual savings for each entity. Working agreements are in place for transportation, microwave transmission, employee health care benefits, computer usage, and other areas of infrastructure. Curriculum flow and articulation is also addressed, with a "college express" program in place under which advanced high school students may begin college courses.

FOSTERING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Currently, after its 10th year, the NAU/AWC partnership has graduated over 1500 students in Yuma with NAU bachelors or graduate degrees. Most of these graduates are from southwest Arizona, are working and with families, could not easily have moved to another campus for their higher education needs, and remain in the region as contributing professionals and civic leaders. Thus, this university/community college partnership supports economic development by increasing the level of educational preparation of people in one of the most rapidly growing metropolitan statistical areas in the country and an area that is a focal point of international trade development.